

Riding In The **Classical Way** On Your Beautiful Arabian Horse

WRITTEN BY JEAN PAUL GUERLAIN



In the past, in addition to his role as master perfumer for the House of Guerlain, Jean Paul Guerlain also accumulated World Championships in Dressage and Carriage Driving.

Guerlain is a French perfume house, amongst the oldest in the world. The House of Guerlain was founded in 1828, when Pierre-Francois Pascal Guerlain opened his perfume store in Paris. Jean Paul Guerlain is fourth generation Geurlain and the last family master perfumer. Jean Paul continues to travel the globe to develop new fragrances.

“Is Your Horse Listening To You While Riding?”

One of my horses makes it perfectly clear to me that he is listening by the position of his ears, by the softness of his breath, by the attitude of his expression, and the effort he puts into the things I ask of him. However, there are some days when he comes out a little fresh or perhaps a little cheeky and you know immediately that this is a day that he will do everything he can to pretend he cannot hear you. He will avoid the leg and prick his ears off to the side of the arena and sometimes even give me a little squeal of boisterous play. On these days I have to be always one step ahead because if I cannot retain his concentration and let him take advantage of that for even a second, then the pricked ears and squeal become an impromptu capriole or reining spin. My trainer used to tell me that my horse had selective hearing, as he could always hear when dinner was being served. On these selective hearing days, it's up to the rider to take charge immediately but without generating more tension. Some riders would pull the horse's head in deep or to one side and use strong leg aids, or speedy fast mini circles to put the horse into submission.

Maybe a very strong rider less technically adept would have some success in getting the horse under control, but a smart horse would soon learn to turn their selective hearing into deafness and become numb or dangerous in the process. My trainer says instead to find a way to keep the horse always thinking so there is no time for him to let his boisterous side take charge. So if I feel that my horse is in an “I might not listen to you mood”, I very quickly start doing things to keep his mind on me. If you are a good rider, technically, you may not even see these things from the ground but you are working silently and subtly to let the horse know that you are there and you are in charge. At the walk, flex a little to the left, then a little to the right—gently to each side then ask a little left leg to see if he moves off and then a little right leg to check he is moving away from both sides. Then the minute he points even a tip of the ear off to one side, ask him to move away from the leg or bend a little to the right or begin transitions in and out of trot. Do not get stuck on one thing and think oh great this is good. Do one thing and then think now I should remind him again that I'm here and



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in charge. Sometimes this is all impossible because my horse is having a selective hearing and chaotic stallion day and he wants to have a spin out of control party with me as his guest. In this case, I either have to ride him forward to let off steam or I must close myself around him like a bird protecting its eggs. I make myself heavy, reassure him that I am there and I am stable and I am not going to his party. In either case, a rider needs to adopt this scenario with conviction, because if I choose to push my stallion forward and then hesitate, he knows and then I am for sure at his party. If I choose to make myself a ball of reassuring stability, I must not lose my balance or release my core or lose the contact for even a second because then the ball becomes a flat tire and again it is party time. On other horses, they may never actually throw a party but are more the “always trying not to listen” types, sometimes even sticking their head up in the air neighing out drifting off into outer space when you are trying to do a circle, etc.

With these horses it is sometimes better not to

try to do too much and just concentrate on a single thing. A horse that is a bit chaotic mentally needs a rider that sticks to a certain pattern and this is where precision can become your greatest tool. If you choose to ride a circle, make it perfect forward and even if you lose attention, focus on your own line and on keeping yourself as direct and as delicate as possible in your aids. I find that if you focus on precision and repetition, these horses will gradually find calm from your technical direction and begin to trust in you to lead them and open their ears up to what you have to say. If your horse has neither of these traits, then a patient caring rider will understand that a horse is a living animal and not a mechanical device. Like us, a horse has its own personality and curiosity about the world around him. On the other hand, if your horse always listens to you and has perfect hearing, well then you are lucky.

Also, reminding you all of the big responsibility you have in your life of owning an Arabian horse. Be sensitive, loving, humble, understanding, patient and show empathy and humility.